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➤CONTRIBUTED NOTES.◀

The Tree of the Field : Deut. XX., 19.—In the English version of the Old Testament, in the middle of the verse a parenthetical sentence appears as follows : “*For the tree of the field is man’s life.*” It will be noticed that the word *life* is in italics, which indicate that it does not appear in the original. This parenthesis has occasioned great difficulty to translators and interpreters. Read literally, it seems to have but little connection with the context : *Because the man the tree of the field.* Accordingly it has been concluded either that something must be mentally supplied, or that there is some error in the Hebrew text as we now have it. Those translators who accept these positions may be named as follows :

I. The authorized version supplies *life* and translates *The tree of the field is man’s life.* The objections to this are : (1) That it supplies an idea which is not clearly suggested by the context. True the statement is made in the same verse “from it thou eatest,” and yet no small distinction lies between this thought and the one which the English translators suggest. (2) It violates the normal arrangement of the sentence by making the subject, the predicate. This would only be done when the predicate was to be made emphatic. If it were desired by the writer to draw the attention of the reader to the fact that the tree of the field is a *man*, then that word would rightly have been put before the subject.

II. The marginal reading in the authorized version removes the parenthesis and, regarding the sentence as a direct address, translates “*for, O man, the tree of the field is to be employed in the siege.*” Here a distinction is recognized between the fruit tree, the tree which is good for food, the tree which grows in the vicinity of the city, mentioned in the preceding part of the same verse and in the following one,—and the tree of the field which is presumably not a fruit-bearing one. This class of trees Moses permits the Israelites to use in building their siege works. The objections to this are (1) that Moses passes too abruptly from his previous method of address into this somewhat violent form. “O man” is not in the Mosaic style certainly. (2) That it violates the Massoretic accentuation.

III. Another class of translators confess their inability to obtain any adequate sense from the passage as it now stands and hence would make a change, or changes, in the text.

1. The Septuagint, representing no small class of interpreters, changes the pointing of the article preceding the word “man,” so that the Hebrew will read *hē* (הֵ) instead of *hā* (הָ) and renders accordingly, “For is the tree of the field a man to come before thee into the siege?”

2. Others infer that a negative idea is contained in the expression and render freely like the Vulgate: “*Since it is a tree and not a man, nor can it increase the number of thy enemies.*” The objections to both these translations are, (1) They convict Moses of giving utterance to a somewhat “puerile and irrelevant” sentiment. Everyone knows that a tree is not a man and such a reason would be of no value as an argument against cutting down trees. (2) This also inverts the sentence, making the predicate the subject. (3) The first rendering introduces a violent change in construction and the second has not more than a shade of reason for supplying a negation.

3. De Wette and others propose to substitute for the letter of the article *hā*

(ה) the preposition lāmēdh (ל) and accordingly read “*Because for man is the tree of the field.*” The distinction must here be made as before mentioned between the ordinary tree and the fruit tree or else this rendering fails to give any adequate sense. It is preferable not to make such a change in the text unless it becomes absolutely necessary.

4. Another critic would transfer to hā ’ādhām (*man*) the athnāḥ or disjunctive accent which now, being under תִּכְרֹת (tīkhrōth) “cut,” separates the sentence at that point, and make the introductory particle כִּי (kī) adversative. He would then read as follows: “*Thou shalt not cut them (i. e., the trees) but the men. The tree of the field is to come before thee in the siege.*” Such a translation is ingenious but too forced to command any general assent.

In gathering up the materials for a tolerably satisfactory translation of this passage it may be inferred: (1) That some error in transcription has crept into the text, for none of the proposed renderings are really satisfactory. (2) That the difficulty lies in the words “the man,” or in Hebrew הָאָדָם. The word may have been לְאָדָם, i. e., *for man*, or הָאָדָם, i. e., *is man*, or some other similarly sounding consonants. הָאָדָם is almost incomprehensible. (3) The distinction between the trees near the city which supply fruit for food and the tree of the field seems plausible, and if it can be sustained will help greatly in the correct exegesis of the passage.

The translation which in our judgment accords best with the context, and which is open to fewer objections is this: “*When thou besiegest a city many days in making war upon it, to capture it, thou shalt not destroy the trees by bringing an ax against them, for from them thou shalt eat, and thou shalt not cut them down, but for man is the tree of the field to bring before thee in the siege.*”

G. S. GOODSPEED.

The Tenses of the Second Psalm.—In order that a clearer view of the Psalm as a whole may be gained, the Authorized Version is given, arranged however according to the Parallelism; and for the sake of comparison, there is placed side by side with it the translation of Rev. T. K. Cheyne, published in the “Book of Psalms,” Parchment Library.

An examination of the verbal forms, with special reference to the tenses discloses the following facts:—

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| 1. Why do the heathen rage,
and the people imagine a vain thing? | Wherefore do the nations throng together,
and the peoples meditate vanity? |
| 2. The kings of the earth set themselves,
and the rulers take counsel together,
[saying,
against the LORD, and against his Anointed, | The kings of the earth stand forth,
and the rulers take counsel together,
against Jehovah and against his anointed: |
| 3. “Let us break their bands asunder,
and cast away their cords from us. | “Let us tear off their bonds,” (say they),
“and cast from us their cords.” |
| 4. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh:
the Lord shall have them in derision. | He who is seated in the heavens laughs,
The Lord mocks at them. |
| 5. Then shall he speak to them in his wrath,
and vex them in his sore displeasure. | Then speaks he unto them in his anger,
and in his hot wrath confounds them: |
| 6. Yet have I set my King
upon my holy hill of Zion. | “... When I have established my king
upon Zion my holy mountain.” |